

One transportation project in my congressional district that Jim Oberstar supported and helped to make a reality was the restoration of St. Paul's Union Depot. This marvelous train depot is now open for Amtrak service and will soon be open for transit commuters. Jim loved the grandeur of the train station and the idea of preserving the past as a means of investing in the future.

During his career Jim Oberstar took thousands of votes and was an eloquent and effective champion for dozens of causes, including adoption, cancer research, and human rights. There are two instances that I remember vividly when Jim's voice, his vote, and his strength made a lasting impact on Minnesotans. In 2002, during the debate on whether to authorize military action in Iraq, Jim was a strong voice against the war in Iraq. I was proud to stand with Jim and Rep. Martin Sabo as the members of the Minnesota House delegation voting to oppose authorizing military action in Iraq.

The other issue that defined Jim Oberstar for me was his tremendous work for Minnesota following the collapse of the I-35W Bridge in Minneapolis on August 1, 2007. As the chairman of the Transportation Committee, Jim was in the right place at the right time to respond to this terrible tragedy. He moved with incredible speed to draft legislation and get it passed on the House floor within forty-eight hours of the collapse. The bill was signed into law on August 6th—less than one week after the disaster. I have no doubt in my mind had that disaster happened in any other state Jim Oberstar would have reacted in exactly the same manner.

At his funeral, Jim's daughters and son spoke lovingly and eloquently about their father. Most of us knew Jim Oberstar was a powerful Member of Congress, but he was also a committed father and a very good man. He cared about working people, the pursuit of social justice, and his Catholic faith. He loved cycling and made his passion for bicycles into national policy that Americans in every corner of this country take advantage of everyday.

I wish to extend my sincere condolences to Jim's wife, Jean, and his children—Noelle Tower, Monica Weber, Annie Oberstar, and Ted Link-Oberstar, as well as all of Jim's grandchildren.

My heartfelt condolences also go out to Jim's congressional family which includes the many dedicated and loyal staff in his Minnesota and Washington congressional offices and his Transportation and Infrastructure Committee staff. The hard work and professionalism of Jim's staff was always evident and I know Jim was very proud of them.

Finally, Jim's long-time chief-of-staff, Bill Richard, spent decades by his side and was essential to Jim's success. I also want to extend my sympathies to Bill for the loss of his friend.

I will always remember Jim as a friend, a mentor, and a public servant of epic stature. Most of all, Jim Oberstar was a truly wonderful man who lived not only a full life, but a life filled with joy and compassion.

## WATER RESOURCES REFORM AND DEVELOPMENT ACT OF 2014

SPEECH OF

**HON. BILL SHUSTER**

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, May 20, 2014*

Mr. SHUSTER. Mr. Speaker, I submit a list of supporters for H.R. 3080: the Water Resources Reform and Development Act.

America's Cement Manufacturers, American Gas Association, American Association of Port Authorities, American Council of Engineering Companies, American Concrete Pavement Association, American Concrete Pipe Association, American Concrete Pumping Association, American Concrete Pressure Pipe Association, American Farm Bureau Federation, American Iron and Steel Institute, American Public Power Association, American Public Works Association, American Road and Transportation Builders Association, American Society of Civil Engineers, American Soybean Association, American Waterways Operators, Arkansas Waterways Commission, Associated Equipment Distributors, Associated General Contractors of America, Association of California Water Agencies, Association of Equipment Manufacturers, Association of State Dam Safety Officials, Big River Coalition, California State Assembly, CH2M HILL, City and Port of Los Angeles, City of Sacramento, Edison Electric Institute, Everglades Foundation, Everglades Trust, Friends of the North Natomas Library, Great Lakes Maritime Task Force, Harbor Maintenance Trust Fund Fairness Coalition, Heritage Park Owners Association, Hilton Fort Lauderdale Beach Resort, International Union of Operating Engineers, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades, Lake Carriers Association, LiUNA, National Asphalt Pavement Association, National Association of Clean Water Agencies, National Association of Flood & Stormwater Management Agencies, National Association of Home Builders, National Association of Manufacturers, National Committee on Levee Safety, National Governor's Association, National League of Cities, National Precast Concrete Association, National Ready Mixed Concrete Association, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, National Rural Water Association, National Stone, Sand & Gravel Association, National Utilities Contractor Association, National Waterways Conference, Natomas Chamber of Commerce, Natomas Charter School, Natomas Community Association, Natomas Unified School District, Nature Conservancy, North Natomas Little League, Sabine Neches Navigation District, Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency, Santa Clara Valley Water District, Sutter Butte Flood Control Agency, Texas Department of Transportation, Tennessee River Valley Association, Transportation Construction Coalition, Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, Portland Cement Association, United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters, United States Society on Dams, U.S. Chamber of Commerce, Valley View Acres Community Association, Vinyl Institute, Water Infrastructure Network, Water Resource Coalition, Waterways Council, Inc., Westlake Master Association, Witter Ranch Community Alliance.

## MEDIA IGNORES THAT THE ADMINISTRATION KNEW ABOUT VA PROBLEMS

**HON. LAMAR SMITH**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, May 22, 2014*

Mr. SMITH of Texas. Mr. Speaker, America's brave men and women in uniform come home from military service only to find severe wait times to receive the medical care they have earned.

Recent reports claim that Veteran Affairs officials in various states, including my home state of Texas, have falsified medical appointment data to conceal these long wait times.

This is dishonest, deceptive, and harmful to veterans.

But ignored for weeks by the liberal national media is that the Obama Administration has long known about these extensive wait times.

According to documents received by the Washington Times, the Bush Administration warned the Obama Administration about the prolonged wait times for our veterans in 2008—six years ago.

But you wouldn't know this if you watched NBC or ABC. Or read many media publications.

The media owes it to the American people, and to our veterans, to give them all the facts.

## HOWARD P. "BUCK" MCKEON NATIONAL DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION ACT FOR FISCAL YEAR 2015

SPEECH OF

**HON. GUS. M. BILIRAKIS**

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, May 21, 2014*

The House in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union had under consideration the bill (H.R. 4435) to authorize appropriations for fiscal year 2015 for military activities of the Department of Defense and for military construction, to prescribe military personnel strengths for such fiscal year, and for other purposes:

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Chair, I rise today in support of my amendment, which would allow disabled veterans with service connected permanent disability rated as total to travel on military aircraft on a space-available basis.

The Space-Available program is administered by the Department of Defense (DOD), which allows active duty service members, their families, retirees and certain other individuals to fill empty seats on DOD flights.

Unfortunately, veterans who are 100 percent disabled do not qualify to participate in this program. My amendment will correct this unintentional oversight and provide equality to service members who were severely injured while serving their country honorably.

Had they not been medically discharged with a service connected disability in the line of duty, these veterans were likely to have served until retirement. At no fault of their own, these deserving individuals did not have the opportunity to continue their military careers. It is an injustice that they would be penalized from this benefit due to their bravery and valor.